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Renaissance—setting new

GOALS FOR EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Board of Education

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**GOALS
FOR
EDUCATION
IN
MASSACHUSETTS**

THE MISSION

Public education is the most significant responsibility of government in maintaining a democratic society. Therefore, the Mission of the Massachusetts Board of Education is to provide leadership and advocacy for the best education for all the people of the Commonwealth.

To plan, serve and support public education, the Board commits itself to:

- assuring equal access to and opportunity for all students in publicly-funded early childhood through secondary, occupational and adult education programs;
- promoting high standards for teaching and for managing educational resources as well as high expectations for learning;
- encouraging a close working relationship with school committees and school districts to attain those standards and expectations;
- creating an educational climate in which teaching is regarded as an honored and desired profession and excellence is recognized;

- promoting a school environment in which participation and leadership are encouraged;
- fostering involvement of parents, students and others in determining and supporting educational policy;
- forging partnerships with families, state and local agencies, business and industry to strengthen public education;
- advocating strong public and government support for educational funding, priorities and policies; and
- initiating and helping shape the laws affecting public education and assuring that they are properly implemented.

The Board will establish goals, policies and priorities to direct the activities of the Commissioner and Department of Education in fulfilling this mission.

FOREWORD

Goals are essential to the process of education. They provide ideals toward which learners and educators may strive as well as a context for learning and a sense of purpose. They are also indispensable for measuring what the process of education does to, for, and with all people in the Commonwealth.

The Goals for Education in Massachusetts, 1987 are based on the original goals developed in 1971 and, like them, address the true meaning of quality education for our time and for the future. Although they are focused on young learners, they are relevant to the lives of learners of any age whether they are in public schools, institutional schools, or learning centers; whether they are in programs of adult basic literacy, occupational training, or continuing education; or in any environment where learning is taking place. The goals are equally applicable to public education for adult learners whom society has failed to equip with basic literacy, and for newcomers to our state who may lack the preparation necessary for full participation in our economy and society. All learners

should strive toward the ideals implicit and explicit in each goal and all educators should assist them in this endeavor.

For purposes of this document, the goals follow one another in a sequence that begins with basic foundations for learning. The goals help to identify performance objectives for learners and suggest responsibilities for educators in giving life to those objectives. In short, they express the quest for equity and excellence in education. We hope the goals will be accepted by all learners and educators, and reflect the expectations of the citizenry of the Commonwealth.

The purpose of public education is the pursuit of knowledge and the preparation of individuals for responsible citizenship in a society that respects differences and shared freedom. Public education is our primary vehicle for promoting intellectual and social development. Education is so critical to our common good that it must be a collective enterprise, involving not only students and their families, teachers, administrators and school committees and the State Board and Department

of Education, but also institutions of higher education, state and local legislative bodies, business and industry, human services agencies, and other concerned citizens.

When public schools and adult learning centers forge a partnership with families, community resources, and business and industry, the result is to strengthen both education and the fabric of our society. All of these forces must work together to assure that public schools have adequate and equitable financial support, an adequate supply of highly professional and creative teachers and a supportive environment for them, the commitment and interest of the local citizenry, and all the other tools necessary to help students achieve these goals.

We call upon all educators and policy-makers to commit themselves anew to the unfinished task of ensuring equality of educational opportunity, so that all learners—whether in preschool, elementary, secondary, or adult education programs—will have an equal chance to develop to their maximum potential and to achieve these educational goals.

1. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Education should contribute to the learner's physical and emotional well-being and development, in a positive environment that fosters self-esteem.

The ability of an individual to achieve well depends on a healthy body and mind and a positive self-concept. Without these basic attributes of physical and mental health, it is difficult to advance toward other educational goals.

Research shows the correlation between a positive self-concept and the desire to achieve in school. Therefore, every effort should be made to help each student develop a solid base for self-esteem, including a sense of individuality and pride in one's accomplishments, and to provide a feeling of security within the school environment and community. Teachers and administrators should build constructive relationships with the students in their charge, convey high expectations to them, and demonstrate their conviction that all students can learn.

It is also essential to offer programs to help students understand human physical and emotional development, and, in partnership with the family

and other community agencies, to provide the counsel necessary to help students act responsibly. Comprehensive health and physical education programs should help students develop individual responsibility for their own well-being, by promoting the concept of lifelong fitness and preventing health-related impediments to learning. Counseling should be available to help the students understand and cope with the problems of our complex society.

Students have varying educational strengths and needs. Teachers should recognize and be responsive to a variety of learning styles, so that all students are encouraged to develop their abilities and talents. Schools should provide appropriate programs and environments that foster students' achievement and self-esteem, and that help all students feel they are an integral part of the regular school program.

Some students suffer from economic deprivation—lack of adequate food, clothing and shelter. Poverty seriously affects the lives of thousands of children and their ability to achieve in school. The school's obligation to nurture these children—to help them overcome barriers to achievement—should be among its highest priorities.

Educational institutions can accomplish this goal only by working in concert with the family and other community agencies. The school, however, should be a focal point for affecting every child's physical and emotional well-being in a positive way.

2. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Education should develop in each learner the reading, writing, listening, speaking and computational skills necessary for effective communication, as well as the ability to think clearly and critically.

Learning can take place only if the individual is able to receive, interpret and respond to information effectively. The early learner has a natural inclination to acquire skills by imitating others. Schools should not only cultivate this inclination through sound instructional programs, but also develop students' evaluative and critical thinking skills and their ability to apply what they have learned.

Schools must identify and respond effectively to problems students may have in acquiring and developing communication skills. Individual attention to each student is of great importance, as is patience in instruction and encouragement toward achievement.

The ability to read, write, speak and understand English is essential in order to succeed in American society. Students whose first language is not English

should be provided with the educational programs and support services necessary to help them achieve English fluency and literacy in a way that respects their native language and culture. At the same time, the cultivation or acquisition of a language other than English is a valuable asset for all students, helping them to live and work in, and more fully appreciate, our culturally diverse world.

The ability to think clearly and critically, to distinguish between fact and opinion, to express ideas creatively, and to use computers and other tools of technology are all essential to this goal. Education must address not only the basic skills, but must also provide each student with the opportunity to value communication as a personal and essential element in the human experience.

3. CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Education should provide each learner with knowledge and understanding of how our society functions, and foster individual commitment to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Teaching citizenship is the first duty of the common school. Citizenship in a democratic society requires effective participation in its political, economic and social institutions. Citizens can participate effectively when they understand how these institutions work, accept responsibility for living within and improving them, are familiar with methods of effecting change, and respect the rights of others in the community. Students should be taught and encouraged to practice these attributes of good citizenship in the school community no less than in the larger society.

Citizenship in a political sense is a compact between the people and their government; it means abiding by the law and seeking to change it when the individual believes it no longer serves society.

Citizenship also requires social awareness, respect for diversity, and commitment to equality of opportunity in every sector of society. The school fosters these goals by explaining issues, encouraging student involvement, and offering action programs designed to promote community service.

Education must help students develop a shared belief in the essential nature of a democratic society based on the freedom and ability of citizens to consider problems in an informed way, to listen to all sides of an issue, and to make sound individual decisions and commitments. This goal can be realized most effectively if the educational system helps students feel they are an integral part of the school, the community and the larger society.

4. VALUES AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Education should expand and advance the humane dimensions of all learners, by helping them to cultivate basic shared values and fostering mutual respect.

Spiritual, moral and ethical values are an outgrowth of one's upbringing; they are formed by the institutions of family, religion and society. The public school is a social institution that should play a significant role in helping to instill basic shared values, such as courtesy, compassion, honesty, self-discipline, tolerance, belief in the dignity of work, and respect for oneself, for others, and for legitimate authority. These values are conveyed not merely by discussion of the great ideas of the world's cultures, but also by the atmosphere of the school, the types of learning experiences offered, the expectations that are presented to students, and the examples set by the adults who work with them.

To foster tolerance and mutual respect, education should provide students with knowledge of their own and each other's heritage and culture. Personal experience is equally important in producing understanding; each student should have the opportunity to interact regularly with people of different races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status, and should work with and respect people of the opposite sex.

This goal means more than learning about cultural and individual differences and the richness they add to our society. Fundamentally, it means appreciating the essential similarities and interdependence of all human beings, and behaving in a way that advances the dignity of all people.

5. ARTS APPRECIATION AND CREATIVITY

Education should provide each learner with a broad range of opportunities to understand and appreciate the arts, to discover and develop talents and interests, and to be creative through various media.

The arts are integral to the quality of life. They express and reflect the human mind and spirit throughout the ages. Our human achievements are recorded in poetry, drama, painting, film, architecture, sculpture, photography, music, dance, and traditional folk arts, among other disciplines. Expanding technology adds to the range of media available for individual expression.

Education should provide students with knowledge and skills in the arts, in order to enhance their capacity to appreciate the rich heritage from varied cultures, and to stimulate individual interests and abilities. Each student should receive a solid

foundation of theory and history, upon which to build knowledge and understanding of the arts.

Education should nourish and develop the student's creative talents, at the same time cultivating in each student an appreciation for excellence and respect for the artistic talents and interests of others, both historical and contemporary. This goal can be achieved through arts education that stresses activities as well as instruction, performance, and opportunities to develop the skills necessary to become a perceptive audience.

6. UNDERSTANDING HISTORY AND THE HUMANITIES

Education should provide each learner with knowledge and understanding of history, the humanities, and our multicultural heritage.

We are the product of history, and can understand ourselves, our community, and our world only in light of what has gone before. The traditions of the past, including the history of all peoples, the great ideas that underlie our laws and moral codes, literature and philosophy all create the context for life and learning today. It is the role of education to transmit this knowledge and aid in its understanding.

Each student should understand history and the humanities as an integrated whole rather than a series of isolated subjects. The study of geography and its relationship to history is one essential component of this understanding, particularly as it

makes students aware of their place in the world and the interdependence of all nations. The social sciences provide students with insight into the human motivations that underlie historical trends and milestones. Similarly, the study of great literature and contemporaneous writings adds richness and life to the study of history, just as historical understanding enhances the student's appreciation of literature.

Education should provide each student with more than knowledge of historical events. It should help the student understand the effect of those events on different fields of human endeavor, and appreciate their significance for our world today.

7. UNDERSTANDING MATHEMATICS AND THE SCIENCES

Education should provide each learner with knowledge and understanding of mathematics and the sciences, encouraging exploration and discovery as well as the acquisition of facts.

Every student should have knowledge and understanding of mathematics and the sciences, with an appreciation of their practical applications as well as theoretical aspects. Schools should assist each student to become competent in measurement, geometry and statistics, all of which are important for understanding the physical world. Students should see mathematics both as a useful tool and as a discipline that can teach logical thinking skills.

Schools should provide each student with a comprehensive program of science instruction, including biology and physical, earth, and space sciences. Students should understand the interrelationships among the sciences rather than learning subjects in isolation. The study of the

sciences should build awareness of the interdependence of all living things and the ways in which we can affect and improve our environment. It should also make students sensitive to the ethical issues raised by new developments in science and technology.

Besides substantive knowledge, each student should derive from the study of mathematics and the sciences an understanding of process, ranging from methods of problem-solving to the scientific approach to inquiry and investigation. These subjects should be presented in a way that encourages exploration, experimentation and critical thinking, so as to hone the intellectual skills of every student.

8. OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCE

Education should provide each learner with the academic and vocational skills necessary for employment and continuing education, opportunities for career exploration and occupational guidance, and productive work habits that will enhance the capacity to adapt to changing conditions.

Occupational competence in our dynamic economy depends increasingly on one's ability to learn and to adapt to change. Strong academic preparation and effective, timely counseling for all students, in conjunction with high-quality occupational education and skills training programs, will prepare them for employment opportunities, career development, and continuing education. Each student should understand that academic skills and advanced knowledge are fundamental to success and mobility in the workplace, and schools should stress the interdependence of academic learning and vocational technical preparation.

Schools should work in partnership with employers and community agencies to develop career exploration opportunities and cooperative work programs, as well as job placements for

students who seek immediate employment. Students should also be provided with occupational guidance to help them keep open their options in school and beyond, as well as to equip them to manage their early experiences in the job market.

Building students' occupational competence is a responsibility for schools at every grade level and in every program. Students should understand the nature of work and its importance in their lives. They should be encouraged to develop a sense of individual responsibility and pride in the results of their efforts. Self-esteem, the ability to work with others as a team, and positive work attitudes will enhance each student's capacity to adapt to new conditions and achieve occupational competence in the years ahead.

9. CAPACITY AND DESIRE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Education should foster and stimulate the natural desire for lifelong learning, and should help learners develop the skills necessary to reach personal goals.

Learning is a lifelong necessity if individuals are to cope successfully with our complex, diverse, and ever-changing society. Learning should be appreciated by everyone as an opportunity for enrichment and growth throughout a lifetime, both for the acquisition of new skills on a continuing basis, and for the sense of achievement and happiness that comes from using one's time and abilities as creatively as possible.

Education must, therefore, help all students develop a framework for seeking and receiving new information, stimulate the desire to learn, and

encourage continuous learning. While symbols of achievement such as credits and a diploma may validate skills, educators and students alike must see these, not as ends by themselves, but as means toward the end of acquiring knowledge. Education must prepare the student for mastering and making creative use of new technologies, for successfully adapting to society's changes, for productive and satisfying use of leisure time, and for learning how to live with others in the increasingly complex and socially and economically interdependent world of tomorrow.

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